

Communication Friendly Classroom Audit Tool (CFCAT)

The CFCAT is designed to support reflection on communication-friendly practice within the classroom. It can be completed as a self-audit or while observing a colleague's classroom. The tool focuses on three key areas that support pupils' speech, language and communication development: the physical environment, high quality classroom talk, and adult use of language. Observe a typical classroom session and rate each standard as 'not in place', 'working towards' or 'consistently in place'. Use the notes column to record examples, strengths and areas for development. The audit is designed to support reflection, professional discussion and action planning to further develop communication-friendly practice.



1. Physical Environment

Pupils' confidence and skills are shaped by their physical and emotional environment. A well thought out environment should remove barriers to communication and support learning, social and emotional development. The environment should make communication easy, effective, and enjoyable. It should provide opportunities for everyone to talk, listen, understand, and take part.

		Rating	Notes
1.1	Visual supports are used consistently		
1.1.1	Visual labelling containing the picture/symbol and the word is used in key areas and on resources.	☐ Not in place ☐ Working towards ☐ Consistently in place	
1.1.2	A visual timetable is displayed. The timetable is used throughout the day, so pupils know the activity they are currently completing. When pupils move around school, e.g., phonics, PE, etc., the timetable is available and used.	☐ Not in place ☐ Working towards ☐ Consistently in place	
1.1.3	'Now and Next' boards and shorter visual timelines are used with pupils who need this level of support.	☐ Not in place ☐ Working towards ☐ Consistently in place	
1.1.4	Task plans, checklists and/or visual plans are used to support understanding of language and promote independent working.	☐ Not in place ☐ Working towards ☐ Consistently in place	
1.1.5	Choice Boards, Communication Boards and/or Communication Books are used appropriately with pupils who need them.	☐ Not in place ☐ Working towards ☐ Consistently in place	
1.2	The environment is organised, structured and supports attention		
1.2.1	Areas are clearly defined, so pupils know what the space is for.	☐ Not in place ☐ Working towards ☐ Consistently in place	

1.2.2	Quiet, distraction-free areas to work are available and actively used by pupils.	☐ Not in place ☐ Working towards ☐ Consistently in place	
1.2.3	The environment reduces distractions by considering background noise, visual clutter and sensory demands.	☐ Not in place ☐ Working towards ☐ Consistently in place	
1.3	Learning spaces are engaging, inclusive, and encourage interaction, discussion and independence		
1.3.1	Role play areas are creative and are available for pupils beyond Early Years.	☐ Not in place ☐ Working towards ☐ Consistently in place	
1.3.2	Book areas are available for all year groups (not necessarily in each classroom). They are appealing, comfortable areas and contain a range of texts, e.g., picture books, fact books, fiction books and first language texts.	☐ Not in place ☐ Working towards ☐ Consistently in place	
1.3.3	Classroom displays are visually appealing, and they reflect and support pupils' learning. They are child-friendly, interactive, multi-sensory and promote discussion.	☐ Not in place ☐ Working towards ☐ Consistently in place	
1.3.4	Pupils are included in deciding what goes on displays. They are taught how to use the displays.	☐ Not in place ☐ Working towards ☐ Consistently in place	



2. High Quality Classroom Talk

Language development can be supported through learning opportunities within the classroom. When staff encourage pupils to think for themselves, ask questions that invite pupils to expand on the idea, and provide justified answers, pupils' skills develop. There should be an ethos in which pupils are secure in sharing their ideas and learning from their mistakes.

		Rating	Notes
2.1	Pupils are supported to communicate in different ways		
2.1.1	All methods of communication are used and encouraged by staff and pupils where appropriate, e.g., speaking, gestures, signing, pointing, Communication Boards/Books, high tech Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).	☐ Not in place ☐ Working towards ☐ Consistently in place	
2.1.2	All pupils are included and engaged in small group activities, regardless of their method of communication.	☐ Not in place ☐ Working towards ☐ Consistently in place	

2.2	Pupils feel safe and confident to ask for help, say they do not understand, and express their needs.		
2.2.1	There is a system for pupils to request help, say they do not understand or request repetition. Pupils feel safe to express their needs.	○ Not in place ○ Working towards ○ Consistently in place	
2.3	All pupils have regular opportunities to talk, share ideas and discuss learning with peers and adults		
2.3.1	Pupils are regularly given opportunities to discuss their ideas and learning with peers on 1-to-1 level or in groups, e.g. 'Think-Pair-Share' etc.	○ Not in place ○ Working towards ○ Consistently in place	
2.3.2	Pupils are regularly given opportunities to discuss their ideas and learning with staff.	○ Not in place ○ Working towards ○ Consistently in place	
2.3.3	Pupils are regularly given opportunities to engage in interactive book reading and discussion.	○ Not in place ○ Working towards ○ Consistently in place	
2.3.4	Some of the following communication-rich opportunities, or similar, are provided: ○ Show and tell ○ Personal narrative / news sharing ○ Word of the day/week ○ Sign of the day/week ○ Word walls ○ Role play / acting out learning ○ 'Ask me about' stickers ○ Oral rehearsal before writing ○ Class podcasts ○ Recording learning by drawing or talking, rather than writing ○ Sharing special interests or expertise ○ Debate / discussion clubs ○ Interviewing visitors/staff ○ Buddy systems ○ Communication clubs	○ Not in place ○ Working towards ○ Consistently in place	
2.4	Staff use questioning and prompts that extend thinking and encourage detailed responses		
2.4.1	Staff use open-ended questions to gain detailed answers.	○ Not in place ○ Working towards ○ Consistently in place	
2.4.2	Staff extend pupils' thinking through suggestions and offering alternative opinions.	○ Not in place ○ Working towards ○ Consistently in place	



3. Adult use of language

Pupils learn language by hearing it in everyday situations. When all staff use good language models and teaching methods, it extends and maximises the opportunities for pupils to learn, opening pupils to their full communicative potential.

		Rating	Notes
3.1	Staff adapt their communication to support understanding		
3.1.1	Staff are face-to-face with pupils when communicating and get down to their level, where possible.	☐ Not in place ☐ Working towards ☐ Consistently in place	
3.1.2	Staff use a slower pace when speaking and pause to give pupils extra time to process questions and instructions.	☐ Not in place ☐ Working towards ☐ Consistently in place	
3.1.3	Staff simplify and repeat what is said to support understanding of language.	☐ Not in place ☐ Working towards ☐ Consistently in place	
3.1.4	Staff keep instructions concise (chunking) and give them in a logical sequence.	☐ Not in place ☐ Working towards ☐ Consistently in place	
3.2	Staff actively develop expressive language by repeating, commenting, modelling and expanding		
3.2.1	Staff repeat, comment, expand and/or explain when responding to pupils' expressive language.	☐ Not in place ☐ Working towards ☐ Consistently in place	
3.3	A multi-sensory approach to learning is used to support communication		
3.3.1	Staff use a multi-sensory approach to support learning including objects, pictures, diagrams, timelines, videos, story sacks, story grids, word maps, mind maps, signing, singing, props etc.	☐ Not in place ☐ Working towards ☐ Consistently in place	
3.3.2	Learning includes demonstrations and/or practical tasks where possible.	☐ Not in place ☐ Working towards ☐ Consistently in place	
3.3.3	Learning takes place in short chunks of listening, having a go, movement etc.	☐ Not in place ☐ Working towards ☐ Consistently in place	

Pupil Voice Audit Tool (PVAT)

The PVAT is designed to gather pupils' views about how communication-friendly their classroom is. It focuses on three key areas: the physical environment, classroom communication opportunities, and adult use of language. Ask one pupil, a small group of pupils, or your whole class to respond to a series of statements about their experiences and to share their ideas for improvement. Use the notes column to record their key comments. The tool is designed to support pupil voice, reflection and discussion, helping staff identify strengths and opportunities to further develop communication-friendly practice.



1. Physical Environment

		Response	Notes
1.1	There are pictures, signs and labels in my classroom which help me to find things I need.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not always	
1.2	There is a timetable displayed which helps me know what is happening next.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not always	
1.3	There are checklists, pictures and other resources available to help me work on my own when needed.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not always	
1.4	There is a quiet place to work when I need to.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not always	
1.5	I can concentrate in my classroom.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not always	
1.6	The book area contains books that interest me and help me to learn.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not always	
1.7	The displays in my classroom help me to learn, talk and share my ideas.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not always	
1.8	I am involved in deciding what goes on the displays in my classroom.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not always	

1.9	What is one thing you would change to make your classroom easier to learn in?	
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2. High Quality Classroom Talk

		Response	Notes
2.1	I can join in and share my ideas in lessons.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not always	
2.2	I feel comfortable asking for help, saying I do not understand, or asking someone to explain again.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not always	
2.3	There are regular chances to talk about my learning with other children.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not always	
2.4	There are regular chances to talk about my learning with adults.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not always	
2.5	Teachers ask questions that help me explain my ideas and think more deeply.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not always	
2.6	There are times when I can share my own interests, ideas and learning in different ways, for example, through role play, presentations, drawing, talking or group activities.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not always	
2.7	What is one thing you would change to make it easier for you and other children to share your ideas?		



3. Adult use of language

		Response	Notes
3.1	Adults explain things in a way that is easy for me to understand.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not always	
3.2	Adults give me time to think before I answer a question or follow instructions.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not always	
3.3	Adults listen and help me develop my thinking when I share an idea or answer.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not always	
3.4	Adults use pictures, videos, objects, demonstrations and practical activities to help me learn.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not always	
3.5	My lessons include a mix of listening, talking, moving and having a go.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not always	
3.6	What is one thing you would change to make it easier for you to understand, learn and join in?		